



**Town of Colchester, Vermont**  
**Annual Town Meeting, February 29, 2016**  
**Australian Ballot Vote, March 1, 2016**

**A Message from the Colchester Selectboard**

Dear Resident and Taxpayer:

February 2016

Enclosed is information about the Town of Colchester's Annual Town Meeting Monday, February 29, 2016 and items to be voted on by private (Australian) ballot on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at Colchester High School.

**Voting Information**

**Reminder: The voting location for District 9-1 has moved to the High School due to a lack of parking and accessibility for seniors and persons with disabilities at the Meeting House.**

- ⇒ Voting is at the Colchester High School on 131 Laker Lane, off Blakely Rd. for **both Districts 9-1 and 9-2**.
- ⇒ **District 9-1** is comprised of the area east of I-89, the west side of I-89 north of the Malletts Creek inlet and excluding the south side of Blakely Road.
- ⇒ **District 9-2** is comprised of the area west of I-89 south of the Malletts Creek inlet, including the south side of Blakely Road.
- ⇒ Absentee Voting takes place February 12 until February 29; you may vote in person at the Town Clerk's office, 781 Blakely Rd., Monday through Friday, 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM,.

Absentee ballots may be requested by phone: 264-5520 or you may access "My Voter Page", a new online resource that allows every registered voter to login, request an absentee ballot, track its status, update their voter registration information, find their polling place, view a sample ballot, and much more. Visit <http://mvp.sec.state.vt.us>

Mail completed ballots to: Town Clerk, P.O. Box 55, Colchester, VT 05446 or e-mail to [TownClerk@ColchesterVT.gov](mailto:TownClerk@ColchesterVT.gov). **Ballots must be returned to the Town Clerk's office by 4:30 PM on Monday, February 29, 2016.**

**Ballot Items**

There are four articles to be voted on by ballot this year:

- Article 14: The Town's General Fund Operating Budget
- Article 15: Re-authorization of the Transportation Capital Plan
- Article 16: Re-authorization of the Park Capital Plan
- Article 17: A proposed Public Safety Capital Plan

**We thank you for the opportunity to serve you and remind you to attend Town Meeting on Monday, February 29, 2016 and vote on or before Tuesday, March 1, 2016.**



**Community Dinner & Town Meeting**  
**Monday, February 29, 2016**  
**⇒ 5:00 P.M.**  
**Colchester High School Cafeteria & Auditorium**

The Colchester Selectboard and School Board will host a free community dinner before the annual Town Meeting. Come join us and your Legislators for dinner, hear the latest news from Montpelier, and discuss local issues in an informal setting.

Please bring a dessert to share.

The community dinner and meetings will begin at **new times**: dinner and legislative briefings at **5:00 PM** and School and Town meetings at **6:30 PM**, in the Colchester High School Auditorium. If you do not attend the community dinner, please arrive by 6:00 PM to check in.

**A Message from Dawn H. Francis**  
**Colchester Town Manager**

The Selectboard and I thank our voters for supporting the budget and approving the local option tax (LOT) in 2015. The expected revenue from the LOT, along with cost savings from operational efficiencies, allowed us to deliver a 5.4% lower municipal tax bill to Colchester residents for FY 16.

We also appreciate Town staff for helping us come in under budget for two consecutive years. The FY14 budget surplus of \$207,530 was used to reduce taxes in FY16 and a FY15 budget surplus of \$187,791 will be used to help reduce the need for property taxes in FY17. Thanks to a team effort, we realized cost savings in building maintenance and energy use, telecommunications contracts, bond interest, and our police vehicle fleet. Our Grand List also increased by 1.69%, due in part to our economic development marketing efforts.

The proposed FY17 budget maintains the same level of services, but recognizes that we have needs for increased public safety dispatch, police coverage, and additional needs for our volunteer fire departments. We are also challenged by state mandates for stormwater management. Eight of our twenty-six program areas were reduced and one was level funded in our budget proposal. A summary of the budget and how we used your investment in the community follows in these pages.

Copies of the Town Report will be available at the Town Meeting, the Town offices, and at our website: [www.colchestervt.gov](http://www.colchestervt.gov).

We hope to see you at the Community Dinner & Annual Town Meeting.



**WARNING  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – 2016  
COLCHESTER, VERMONT**

The legal voters of the Town of Colchester, Vermont are notified and warned to meet at the Colchester High School Auditorium, Laker Lane, in said Town on Monday, February 29, 2016, at 6:30 p.m. to act on the following articles not involving voting by Australian ballot (Articles 9-12):

Absentee ballots may be requested until 4:00 p.m. on Monday, February 29, 2016, by calling the Town Clerk's Office at (802) 264-5520.

**ARTICLE 9**

To choose a moderator, if elected moderator is not present.

**ARTICLE 10**

To act on reports of the Town Officers.

**ARTICLE 11**

To set compensation, if any, to be paid to the Selectboard.

**ARTICLE 12**

To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.

**ARTICLE 13**

To adjourn said meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester High School, Laker Lane, in said Town on Tuesday, March 1, 2016, for voters in District 9-1 and District 9-2 to vote for Town Officers and to transact any other business involving voting by Australian Ballot with voting to begin at 7:00 a.m. and to close at 7:00 p.m.

**ARTICLE 14**

"Shall the voters of the Town of Colchester approve total general fund expenditures of Twelve Million, One Hundred Fifty-Five Thousand, Two Hundred Fifty-Nine Dollars (\$12,155,259), of which Ten Million, Thirty-Five Thousand, Eight Hundred and Thirty-Four dollars (\$10,035,834) shall be raised by taxes and Two Million, One-Hundred Nineteen Thousand and Four Hundred Twenty-Five dollars (\$2,119,425) by non-tax revenues for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017?"

**ARTICLE 15**

"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the Selectboard to continue to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually through the continuation of the existing tax rate in the amount of \$0.0325 (three and one quarter cents) per one hundred dollars of assessed property value, for a period of six years, for the purpose of financing the Capital Transportation Program?"

**ARTICLE 16**

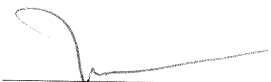
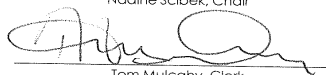

"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the Selectboard to continue to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually through the continuation of the existing tax rate in the amount of \$0.005 (one half cent) per one hundred dollars of assessed property value, for a period of six years, for the purpose of financing the Park Capital Plan?"



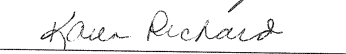
**ARTICLE 17**


"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the Selectboard to create and maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Eighteen Thousand, Seven Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$18,750) for a period of five years for the purpose of financing the Public Safety Capital Plan?"

**DATED AT COLCHESTER, VERMONT THIS 12th DAY OF  
JANUARY, 2016.**

**Colchester Selectboard**

  
Nadine Scibek, Chair  
  
Tom Mulcahy, Clerk  
  
Jeffrey D. Bartley

  
Herbert Dawning, Vice Chair  
  
Marc Landry  
  
Karen Richard, Town Clerk

COLCHESTER, VT.  
RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
Jan 14 AD 2016 AT  
04 O'Clock 00 Min. 00 P M  
Recorded in Vol. \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_  
of the Land Records.  
Attest:   
Asst. Town Clerk

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

In compliance with the American With Disabilities act those requiring accommodation for this meeting should notify the Town Clerk's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at 802-654-0727, TDD 1-800-253-0191 (Text/Telephone), 1-800- 253-0195 (Voice).

## Town Budget Overview FY 2017

### Proposed Budget

We are proposing a 1.2% budget increase to maintain our same level of services. Due to increased demands on our emergency services, another 1.2% increase will provide an additional public safety dispatcher (funded in part by the Town of Milton); police overtime of \$25,653, and an increase of \$45,648 to support our volunteer fire departments. State mandated stormwater costs require another \$25,000. These proposed additions result in a 2.4% budget increase overall; however, we will be able to continue our three-year downward trend on tax rate increases this year.

### Cost Containment Measures

We continue to focus upon cost containment and operational efficiencies:

- ⇒ Conducted an energy audit of all facilities to reduce energy consumption.
- ⇒ Restructured police vehicle fleet with more fuel efficient vehicles and to reduce fit-up costs.
- ⇒ Focused on non-tax revenues for support of operating expenses. Budgeted non-tax revenues are projected to increase 5.1% by our increasing building permit fees and ambulance service fees.
- ⇒ Obtained grants for critical infrastructure improvements.
- ⇒ Shared equipment and services with other municipalities.
- ⇒ Emphasized employee safety and wellness.
- ⇒ Renegotiated bond interest rates and terms as well as various service contracts.
- ⇒ Continued evaluation of positions and staffing with some positions combined, eliminated or restructured.
- ⇒ Local Option Tax to offset debt obligations and reduce tax rate

### Budget Impact Estimate

Our preliminary conservative estimate is that a 2.4% budget increase will increase the tax rate by about 3/4 of 1 cent per hundred dollars of property valuation, or 1.3%. For a home valued at \$300,000, this translates into an annual increase of \$21.30 per year. If we see increased grand list growth over the next five months, this amount may be even lower. The Local Option Tax, which went into effect in October, is being used to pay for our debt service, which is \$643,136, and also contributes to the lower tax rate.

The following pages contain charts and tables showing the highlights of the proposed budget as well as some comparative information.

You will find additional details on the budget at our website:  
<http://colchestervt.gov/349/Budget-Documents>

## Town of Colchester Proposed FY 17 General Fund Budget

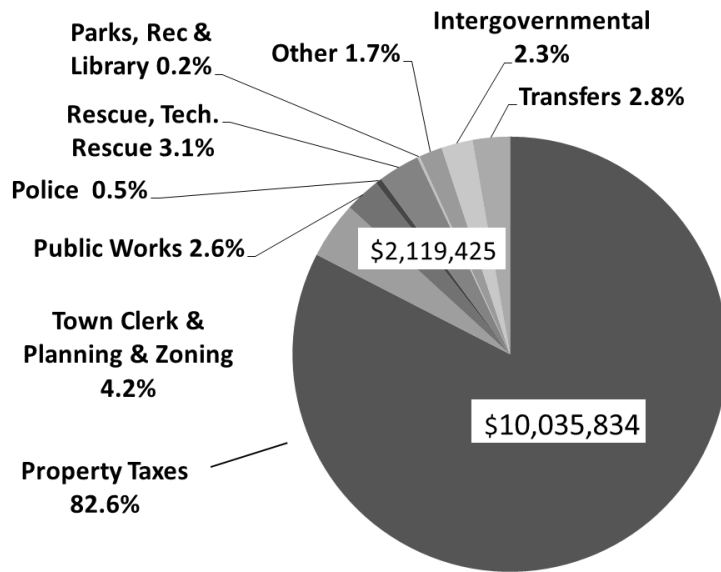
### Revenues

Revenue Type	Proposed FY 17	FY 16	% Change from FY 16	\$ Change from FY 16
Property Taxes	\$10,035,834	\$9,799,843	2.4%	\$236,351
Other Revenues	\$2,119,425	\$2,068,294	2.5%	\$51,131
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$12,155,259</b>	<b>\$11,867,777</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>\$287,482</b>

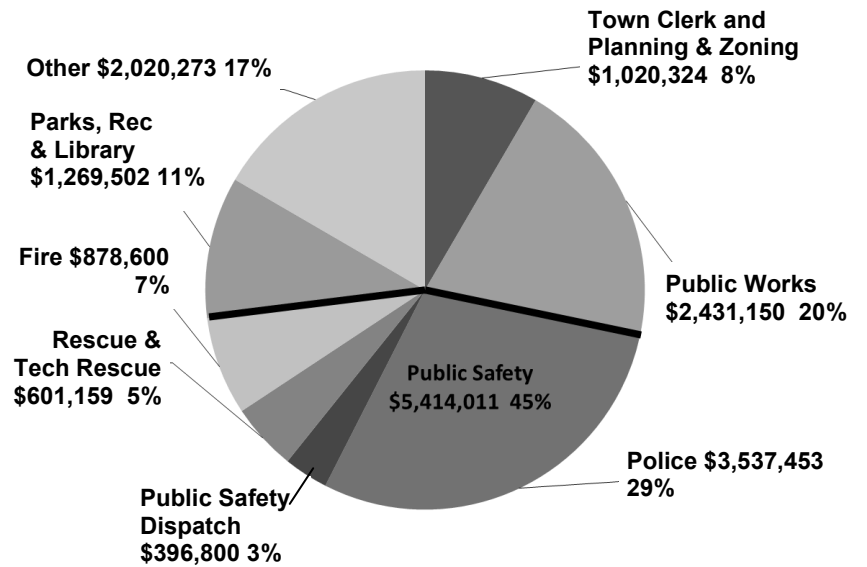
### Expenses

Department	Proposed FY 17	FY 16	% Change from FY 16	\$ Change from FY 16
Selectboard	\$77,828	\$80,328	-3.1%	\$(2,500)
Transfers	\$182,742	\$218,990	-16.6%	\$(36,248)
Civil Board	\$45,228	\$42,730	5.8%	\$2,498
Manager	\$548,397	\$526,660	4.1%	\$21,737
Economic Development	\$126,789	\$122,550	3.5%	\$4,239
Finance	\$376,416	\$353,614	6.4%	\$22,802
Assessor	\$193,720	\$207,282	-6.5%	\$(13,562)
Town Clerk	\$363,863	\$349,360	4.2%	\$14,503
Planning & Zoning / DRB	\$611,233	\$593,325	3.0%	\$17,908
Information Tech	\$158,957	\$199,775	-20.4%	\$(40,818)
Police	\$3,537,453	\$3,459,907	2.2%	\$77,546
Dispatch	\$396,800	\$327,504	21.2%	\$69,296
Fire Departments	\$878,600	\$833,052	5.5%	\$45,548
Rescue	\$567,019	\$537,764	5.4%	\$29,255
Tech Rescue	\$34,140	\$42,169	-19.0%	\$(8,030)
Public Works-Admin	\$594,536	\$577,300	3.0%	\$17,236
Highway	\$1,105,671	\$1,088,431	1.6%	\$17,240
Maintenance Facility	\$346,034	\$333,137	3.9%	\$12,897
Stormwater	\$206,028	\$179,077	15.1%	\$26,951
Buildings	\$178,879	\$179,475	-0.3%	\$(596)
Health Services	\$57,850	\$57,850	0.0%	\$ -
Parks	\$387,891	\$400,452	-3.1%	\$(12,561)
Recreation	\$224,440	\$219,674	2.2%	\$4,766
Library	\$657,171	\$641,129	2.5%	\$16,043
Cemetery	\$20,558	\$23,347	-11.9%	\$(2,789)
Intergovernmental	\$277,016	\$272,893	1.5%	\$4,122
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$12,155,259</b>	<b>\$11,867,777</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>\$287,482</b>

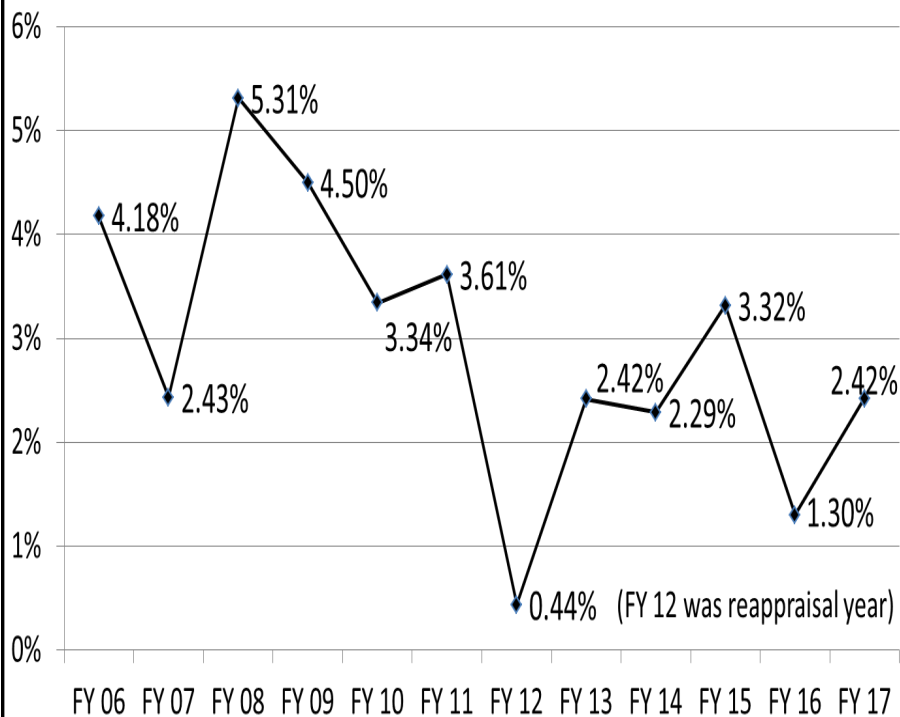
## FY17 General Fund Revenues



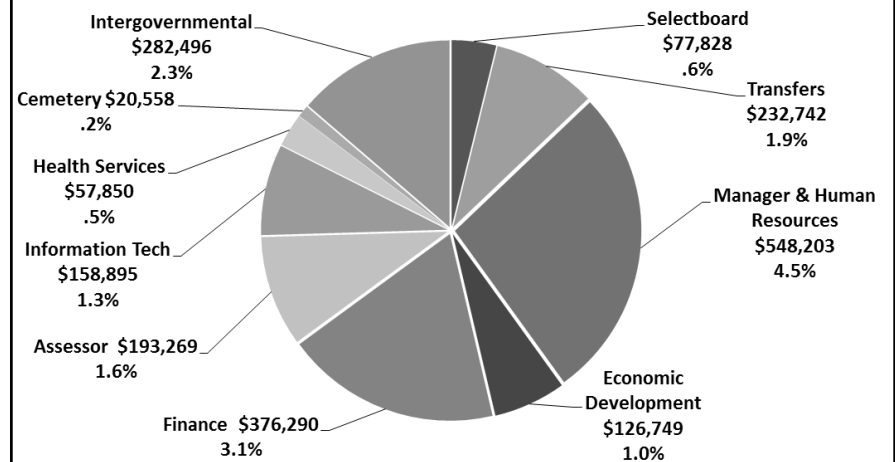
## FY17 Budget by Category



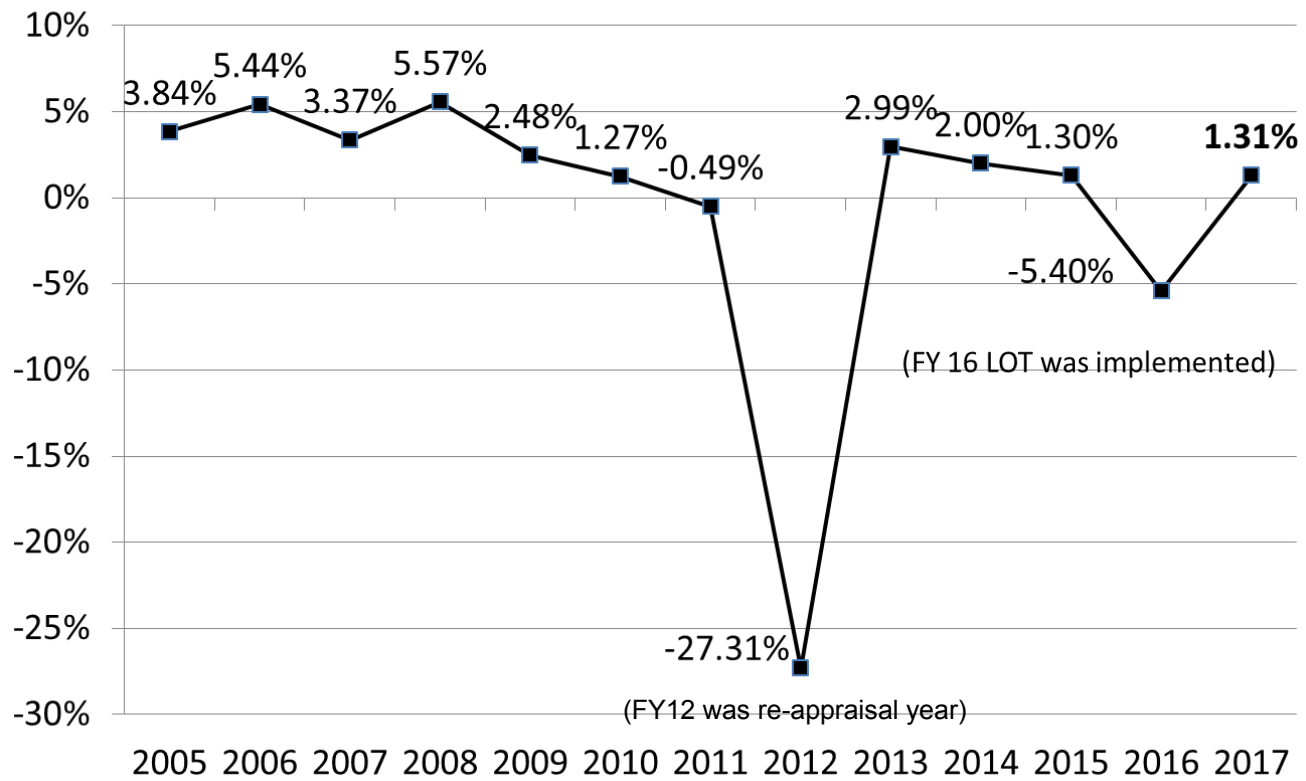
## General Fund Budget Change



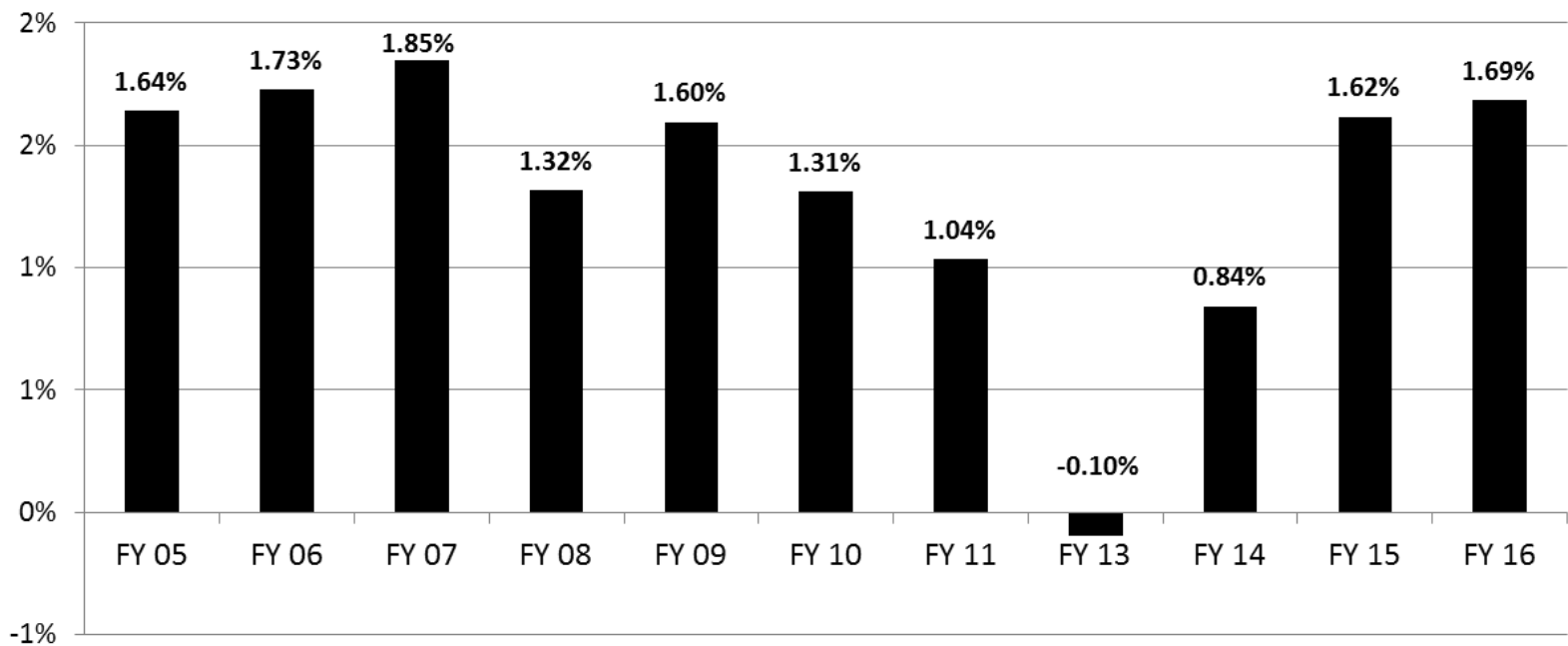
## FY 17 "Other" Expenses



### Colchester Tax Rate Change



### Grand List % Increase (excluding reappraisal years)





## Building a Better Colchester

### Articles 15 and 16: Capital Plan Reauthorizations

The Colchester Selectboard and Administration are committed to safe roads and sidewalks, a clean lake and parks to be enjoyed by all citizens. The Capital Transportation Plan and Park Capital Plan have been supported by our voters for many years and are scheduled to be reauthorized on Town Meeting Day (March 1, 2016). Also proposed is a Public Safety Capital Plan to fund the equipment and communications needs for the Rescue and Technical Rescue Departments instead of including these items in our yearly operating budget, resulting in a decrease in expenses.

#### What are the (a.) Capital Transportation Plan and (b.) Park Capital Plan?

They are multi-year capital funding authorizations **previously approved** by the voters to pay for:

- ⇒ **Transportation:** Paving, roadway repair, bridge replacement, pedestrian improvements, sidewalks, paths, safety improvements, and stormwater and drainage projects to improve water quality.
- ⇒ **Parks:** Athletic fields, playground equipment, tennis courts, basketball courts, skateboard parks, park paths and trails, open space, and parking and buildings such as picnic pavilions.

#### Why Reauthorize the Plans?

- ⇒ To keep our roads safe
- ⇒ Keep our lake and Malletts Bay clean
- ⇒ Reduce maintenance and replacement costs
- ⇒ Leverage state and federal grant funds
- ⇒ Promote public health and wellness opportunities
- ⇒ Promote sustainable economic development and grand list growth

#### Why multi-year capital plans instead of funding from the annual General Operating budget?

A capital plan is a tool for the future planning and construction of non-recurring capital projects. Such a plan:

- ⇒ Provides reliable funding for multi-year capital projects
- ⇒ Avoids interest expense on debt
- ⇒ Evens out the tax burden over many years
- ⇒ Gives the Town an advantage in grant procurement
- ⇒ Reduces overall costs for taxpayers by investing in improvements before they are more costly to repair

#### How long have we had these plans and how many times have we approved them?

The **Capital Transportation Plan** was approved in 1993 and has been re-authorized by voters three separate times.

The **Park Capital Plan** was approved in 2001 and has been re-authorized by voters two separate times.

#### What has the Transportation Plan paid for? Since 2010:

Roadway and intersection reconstruction	\$956,642
Roadway paving	\$1,390,877
Bridge replacement and repair	\$970,877
Sidewalks and paths	\$1,571,143
Stormwater and drainage improvements	\$1,364,663
Total	\$6,254,194

*Approximately 40% or \$2.5 million of these expenses were paid for by state and federal grants obtained because the Town was able to supply "matching" funds from our Capital Transportation Plan.*

#### What has the Park Plan funded? Since 2010:

##### Airport Park

- Expanded irrigation
- Widened entry road
- Replaced tennis court fence
- New park maintenance building

##### Bayside Park

- New park entry & traffic island
- New playground
- Roof on Bayside bathhouse
- New softball infield material

##### Colchester Causeway

- Resurfaced trail

##### Fort Ethan Allen

- New playground

##### Heritage Park

- New playground

##### Law Island

- Removed old buildings & cars

#### Will these plans cost me more?

**No.** For the owner of a \$300,000 home, the Capital Transportation Plan currently costs \$97.50 per year and the Park Capital Plan costs \$15 per year. **There is *no* increase proposed in the current rate for either plan.**



*Our beautiful and well-maintained community parks are among Colchester's greatest assets.*



## Article 17: Public Safety Capital Plan

### What will the proposed Public Safety Capital Plan fund?

The items that will move to a Public Safety Capital Plan include:

- ⇒ Police boat & motors
- ⇒ Technical rescue equipment: air tanks, air packs, inflatable boats, search camera, harnesses, swiftwater suits and communications equipment
- ⇒ Rescue equipment: power-cots, stair-chairs, cardiac monitors/defibrillators, and radio equipment

These items are currently paid for from the yearly operating budget and cost the owner of a \$300,000 home \$3.84 per year. The proposed Public Safety Capital Plan will reduce this cost to \$2.73 per year by providing certainty for future funding which allows for deliberate equipment replacement planning, increased opportunities to obtain grant funding, and providing funding flexibility across public safety departments based on need in a given fiscal year.

### What will happen if these multi-year capital plans are not approved and reauthorized by voters?

If the multi-year capital plans are not approved by the voters, the Town will have to reduce the upkeep and maintenance of our roads, paths, parks, and equipment. We would need to budget on an annual basis for these items resulting in borrowing costs, tax rate spikes, and fewer grant funding opportunities.

### What are the questions to be voted upon?

#### ARTICLE 15

"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the Selectboard to continue to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually through the continuation of the existing tax rate in the amount of \$0.0325 (three and one quarter cents) per one hundred dollars of assessed property value, for a period of six years, for the purpose of financing the Capital Transportation Program?"

#### ARTICLE 16

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#### ARTICLE 17

"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the Selectboard to create and maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Eighteen Thousand, Seven Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$18,750) for a period of five years for the purpose of financing the Public Safety Capital Plan?"

For details on these Capital Plans, including projects being considered, please visit: [www.colchestervt.gov](http://www.colchestervt.gov)

## Comparison – Inner Chittenden County Town Tax Rates

Williston	.285
So. Burlington	.4560
Essex Town	.4880
<b>Colchester (4<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>.5405</b>
Essex Jct.	.7704
Burlington	.7926
Winooski	1.025
<b>Average</b>	<b>.6165</b>



2015-16 MUNICIPAL TAX RATES FROM TOWN LISTER/ASSESSOR'S DATA  
Colchester is 13% **below average** for inner Chittenden County.

# FY 2014-15 Accomplishments

Fiscal Year 2014-15 saw great progress on some major projects and initiatives. Highlights and accomplishments of this last year include being named “**40th Best Place to Live in America**” by Money Magazine, as well as:

## Budget | Revenues

- ♦ The Local Option Tax (LOT) passed resulting in a municipal tax rate reduction (5.4% less) and allows us to pay off our debt. Subject to voter approval, the LOT may allow us to make critical capital improvements in the future.
- ♦ Charter changes were developed by the Governance Committee and approved by voters (the appointed versus elected Town Clerk issue was defeated by 13 votes).
- ♦ Voters approved reserve funds for technology, telephone and radio replacements.
- ♦ Our budget increase was the lowest in 10 years (1.3%).
- ♦ The grand list grew more than expected (1.69%).
- ♦ Our audit was clean and fixed asset inventory is substantially complete.

## Organization

- ♦ Updated Local Emergency Operations Plan and reinforced our emergency preparedness and collaboration with all Colchester emergency responders.
- ♦ Firearms ordinance was updated with resident participation.
- ♦ Significant progress making permits and other records available on-line by the Clerks, Assessor, and Planning & Zoning offices. We lead the State in online accessibility of records used most often by the public.

## Buildings | Facilities | Infrastructure

- ♦ The appointment of the Cemetery Advisory Committee has resulted in improvements in the appearance of the Malletts Bay Cemetery. The Committee is working with Staff on clean-up and improved maintenance of all the Town’s cemeteries, as well as computerizing records and mapping.
- ♦ New development at Severance Corners occurred. To meet State Growth Center requirements, an attractive Visitor Information Center was installed at no significant cost to taxpayers.
- ♦ Major projects such as Mill Pond Road and Colchester Pond bridge reconstruction
- ♦ New sewer, water, and stormwater systems in Windemere Mobile Home Park were facilitated by the Town and paid for by owner
- ♦ Smith Estates drainage improvements
- ♦ Building repairs to the Library and the Town Meeting Hall were completed.

## Services

- ♦ CCTA transit service from Burlington to Milton along the Route 7 corridor continues to attract riders.
- ♦ Expanded Library programs and public outreach and facility improvements made.
- ♦ Recreation programs were expanded; after school/summer program participation increased; paddle sport rentals at Bayside Park were introduced.
- ♦ Achieved State Agency of Natural Resources delegation authority to administer and enforce the Town’s shoreland regulations.

## Want to stay informed?

The Town’s new interactive website has launched along with a mobile app. You’ll find links to agendas and minutes for boards and committees; weekly newsletters; Town alerts; employment and volunteer opportunities; interactive maps; forms and applications, and more! The new “**Notify Me**” feature allows you to sign up for email updates on the Town news *you* care about most and the “Contact Us” page lets you email questions and comments to any of the Town departments.

In addition, you’ll find us on Facebook and Front Porch Forum.

Selectboard meetings are open to all residents who wish to attend and be heard: meetings can be viewed in their entirety on LCATV Channel 17.



*Thank you*  
volunteers!

We would like to extend our sincere and utmost appreciation to the members of all of our volunteer boards, commissions and volunteer Fire, Rescue and Technical Rescue emergency responders. You all make the Town shine and we could not do what we do without your assistance and tireless dedication to the safety and betterment of this community.



**Colchester**  
VERMONT